

Cops find deceit—but no one cares

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By George Bliss

LINDA TAYLOR received Illinois welfare checks and food stamps, even tho she was driving three 1974 autos—a Cadillac, a Lincoln, and a Chevrolet station wagon—claimed to own four South Side buildings, and was about to leave for a vacation in Hawaii.

It's no wonder she aroused the bloodhound instincts of police detectives Jack Sherwin and Jerry Kush. They worked nearly a month on their own time tracking down Miss Taylor, 47, thru a multitude of aliases, phony addresses, and husbands, trying to find out what she was up to.

They're still not sure, but they say they uncovered a lifestyle of false identities that seemed calculated to confuse our computerized, credit-oriented society.

AND IF trailing Miss Taylor was like putting together pieces in a puzzle, trying to interest county, state, and federal authorities in her case was a study in frustration and bureaucratic buckpassing.

If the policemen hadn't discovered that Michigan was seeking Miss Taylor on a warrant charging welfare fraud in that state, they would have written off their efforts as a waste of time.

However, as a result of the Michigan warrant, an extradition hearing for Miss Taylor is scheduled Monday in Circuit Court.

SHERWIN, 35, and **Kush**, 33, who are assigned to the burglary unit, came upon Miss Taylor Aug. 8 when she reported that \$14,000 in cash, jewelry, and furs—much of it insured—had been stolen from her apartment at 8221 S. Clyde Av.

There was something familiar about Miss Taylor and her burglary report. The detectives said later that if she hadn't been wearing one of her 30 wigs, they'd have recognized her sooner.

But a fingerprint check revealed that in 1972, under another name, she had made a phony report of a \$10,000 burglary from another apartment.

Sherwin and Kush determined that the latest burglary also was a fake and charged her with making a false report to police—a misdemeanor carrying a light penalty.

IN THE apartment, they also found welfare checks she had received at two Chicago addresses under two names, and food stamps which suggested to Sherwin and Kush that she was fooling the welfare department and possibly violating the law. So they set out to learn all they could about her.

They discovered a number of activi-

ties—not all illegal—that indicated that Miss Taylor had a highly unusual way of life. There was evidence that she:

- Goes under at least 27 different names.

- Uses 31 different addresses, all but a few in Chicago.

- Has 25 different phone numbers.

- Has three social security cards.

- Owned stocks and bonds under a variety of names.

- Claims to have had several other husbands who died.

- Was married, under one of her aliases, last month to a sailor at Great Lakes Naval Training Center who is 26 years her junior.

THEIR QUEST took them from grimy South Side tenements to Great

Lakes to the offices of Loop banks as they conducted one painstaking interview after another.

Then, they said, they had to go on a virtual shopping expedition to various government agencies trying to interest one of them in the case.

Case report, Miss Taylor's welfare checks, welfare identification card, and food stamps in hand, they went to the Excessive Assistance Service of the Illinois Department of Public Aid.

In a 14-page report to his police department superiors, Sherwin told what happened:

"After the undersigned officer explained the entire case, he was told that they would look into the matter but that they were not allowed to make any in depth investigations and that

generally they were content with minor misdemeanor charges—rarely would the state's attorney's office approve of felony charges."

They went to the state's attorney's office only to learn that on July 1 the Illinois Attorney General's office took over welfare fraud cases.

In a five-minute interview in the U. S. attorney's office, the policemen were told "it was a matter of several federal agencies that would be involved but not something that they [U. S. attorney] handled."

In growing desperation they picked up a phone and called the Michigan State Police in South Haven, and for the first time encountered genuine interest because of the outstanding warrant.